

## Big Caney Water Improvement Project 2

### Groundbreaking Ceremony for Big Caney Water System Improvement Project

Dickenson County, Virginia

April 23, 2005

I am pleased to return to Dickenson County this morning to participate in the groundbreaking ceremony for the first phase of the Big Caney Water Improvement project.

Earlier this month, I participated with Dickenson officials in the formal commencement of water service for more than 260 homes and businesses in the communities of Bear Pen Creek, Cutter Creek and Pine Creek. At that time, I reported on the outstanding strides that we are making in establishing public drinking water and wastewater infrastructure for the residents of Dickenson County.

Approximately 20 years ago, only 40 percent of Dickenson County residents had access to publicly provided drinking water. Since that time, we have actively worked to obtain millions in federal funding to establish new water systems in Dickenson County, including \$32 million in the past 10 years alone. Today, everyone here can proudly acknowledge that this work on the part of many people has born fruit. Today, 79 percent of all Dickenson County homes have access to publicly funded water systems, and that percentage will increase to 85 percent in the near future as major water projects in the Lick Creek and Lick Fork communities near completion. The Big Caney Water Improvement project for which we break ground today is another shining example of the progress which is being made here in Dickenson County.

The project is one of the largest water improvement projects in the history of our region. Currently, 1/3 of the households in Dickenson County rely on the Big Caney water system, either directly or indirectly, for drinking water, but the water system is in serious need of repair. Water testing conducted by the Dickenson County Public Service Authority has shown that approximately 40 percent of water in the system is lost due to leaks in the water lines. These leaks have dramatically increased the cost of operating and maintaining the water system and have degraded the quality of water service provided to residents who receive drinking water from the system.

The total cost of construction for the first phase of the Big Caney project is \$2,083,000, all of which is being provided through a provision of federal funding which I have obtained. At my request, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, through its Rural Development Agency, has provided a federal grant in the amount of \$1,546,200 and a low-interest federal loan in the amount of \$536,800 for the first phase of work.

The first phase will improve the public water service for residents and businesses in the community of McClure and portions of the communities of Tarpon and Caney Ridge.

As part of the first phase of the project, 54,700 feet of water lines will be replaced from White Ridge to Puckett Gap and from Peuther Chapel where we are gathered today to Yates Chapel. The new water lines will be larger to enable better water service to the residents in the area. In addition, a new water pump station will be constructed at Gay Branch, and a 60,000 gallon water storage tank will be installed in the McClure community to replace a 30,000 gallon tank which is currently in use. It is expected that the water improvements for the first phase of the project will take approximately one year to complete.

I would also like to take the opportunity of these remarks to comment on the future phases of the Big Caney water project which are rapidly moving towards the construction phase. Funding is already in place for the second phase of the project, and Dickenson County officials plan to begin construction on Phase II this fall.

The total cost of the second phase is \$2,345,400. Of that total amount, more than 85 percent is being provided through federal funding sources. Last year, I obtained a federal grant in the amount of \$300,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission for Phase II. Since that time, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded a federal grant in the amount of \$1,231,750 through its Safe Drinking Water Act program. In addition, a federal Community Development Block Grant in the amount of \$500,000 has been secured for the project. Dickenson County is providing \$313,650 to complete the funding package necessary for Phase II.

Phase II of the project will continue the replacement of water lines that will begin today with the groundbreaking for Phase I by replacing the water lines in the communities of Tarpon, Caney Ridge and Clinchco. Water lines will be replaced from Puckett Gap to the Big Ridge water storage tank and from Yates Chapel to the Caney Ridge water storage tank. In addition, a new 200,000 gallon water storage tank will be installed in the community of Tarpon. Construction for Phase II of the project is expected to be completed by the Fall of 2006.

Following the completion of Phase II in 2006, Dickenson County plans to move forward with the final phases of the water improvement project. Phases III and IV will commence simultaneously.

The total cost of Phases III and IV is \$5 million. At this time, I have obtained \$500,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission for these final water improvements, and applications are currently pending with the Rural Development Agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency's Safe Drinking Water Act program to secure the additional funds necessary for this large water project. I expect to announce the approval of funding from the Rural Development Agency in the very near future to ensure that construction for the final phases occurs in the near future.

Phases III and IV include the construction of six new pump stations throughout the Big Caney service area, including the construction of two pump stations in the Big Ridge and Baker communities. Three new water storage tanks will also be installed. A 150,000 gallon water storage tank will be installed in the community of Clinchco, a 100,000 gallon tank will be installed in Upper Caney Ridge, and the existing tank at Big Ridge will be replaced with a new 200,000 gallon water storage tank. The existing tank in Caney Ridge will also be replaced with a new water storage tank.

As a final element of the project, the water distribution systems for the Big Ridge and Caney Ridge communities will be connected to ensure greater water service to the residents of those communities. In addition, the water lines in Upper Caney Ridge will be replaced with newer lines.

There are several individuals who deserve our thanks today for the efforts they have made on behalf of this project and their commitment to establishing safe and reliable drinking water for the residents of Dickenson County.

Scott Moore, Chairman of the Dickenson County Board of Supervisors, and other Members of the Board deserve our thanks for their leadership in the effort to ensure that the Big Caney water system is a safe and reliable resource of drinking water for the many residents who rely on it.

I also want to thank Damon Rasnick, Chairman of the Dickenson County Public Service Authority; Ron Phillips, Executive Director of the PSA; and the excellent staff at the PSA. Without these dedicated individuals, we would not be celebrating the outstanding strides Dickenson County is making in infrastructure development .

I also want to recognize Keith Viers, Dickenson County Administrator, and Leman Kendrick, County Engineer, for their effective work in aid of this project.

Finally, I want to thank my District Administrator, Laura Lee, and my new Project Manager, Courtney Lamie, for their persistent and persuasive work in achieving this success. Their outstanding work has substantially contributed to the success that we celebrate today.

Today's ceremony is an example of what can be achieved when citizens and government officials at the local, state and federal levels work together in aid of a common purpose. For that cooperation and successful work in upgrading the Big Caney water system, I want to commend everyone here and offer special congratulations to the residents and business owners who will be receiving the greatly improved water service.